

# GRAPPLING GRIEF

Chronicle the  
development of  
an undergraduate  
capstone project  
through loss



# NATALIE

# JANINE











## Grappling Grief



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# Preface

Entering the final year of my undergrad, I lost my grandmother a bit unexpectedly, knowing one day it would happen considering her journey with leukemia. Still, nevertheless, I was caught off guard.

Life kept moving, as it, unfortunately, does amidst loss, and before I knew it, I was in the middle of my classes and past the deadline to drop out without financial penalty. So here is where I find myself: at the end of my undergraduate program, having spent an entire academic year unable and unwilling to incorporate my work into my long list of interests or beef up a professional portfolio.

I spent an entire semester working in a different area of research, looking at community development in Vancouver, a notoriously heartfelt and simultaneously cutthroat city, noticeably obsessed with the details of the lives of my community submitters rather than the content of their stories. I spent an entire semester looking into other people's thoughts instead of the head full of them that was sitting on my shoulders.

After packing my world with as much as possible regarding work, doing favours for friends, and even travelling, the exhaustion set in with a vengeance. Emotionally and physically spent, I began to slow down (against my will,) leading to me facing massive changes in my life, resentment towards my own family, and the indifference of so many towards grief.

Lost directionally and with a loss on the mind, the weekly activities and responses written in this class, as asked for by Robin, helped to inform the complete shift in my capstone work and allowed me to confidently scrap a semester of work in the name of exploring my grief.

I have packed a year's worth of grief into explorations of the feelings and effects of it over a handful of months through age-old printing techniques, alternative visual storytelling and unobstructed confrontation of grief. Processes which rely on slow, tedious, involved, and repetitive motions; the same circumstances as my chosen weekly activities.

These weekly activities, and the accompanying assigned readings, allowed me to reflect on the difficulty I had grappling with grief alongside completing my degree, and informed every single one of the explorations in making-based research that went into the body of work making up my undergraduate capstone project.

The journey to discovering my need for a shift in my research, and through the completion of it, is compiled here as a collection of writing done throughout the work in response to my weekly activities, as well as reading assignments from this class, some of which ended up appearing in the final publication companion to my capstone explorations.







## On Exformation

“[Exformation is]  
half of a  
conceptual  
pairing,  
the other half  
being  
information.”

***Kenya Hara***

*Renowned Japanese graphic designer, curator and writer, Hara is a graduate of Musashino Art University. Now a professor, he has taught Communication Design and Design Theory in Science for their Design Faculty since 2001.*

**In *Designing Design*, Kenya Hara discusses the concept of “Exformation” as understanding what little we know.** I’m not sure what I know.

In *Designing Design*, Kenya Hara discusses the concept of “Exformation” as understanding what little we know.

In life, there are the known knowns, the unknown knowns, and the known unknowns. I’m not sure who said that, but I imagine they would have enjoyed hearing Hara on exformation.

On the note of what we do not know that we don’t know, Kenya Hara writes about the commonly thrown-around phrase “I know, I know,” noting that conversation only seemingly progresses with its use. Further discussion is halted. Its use feels like people want to limit contact, and so, even if they DO know (know), they don’t want to talk, and they have no desire to discuss the topic with someone.

They may want to maintain the upper hand and possess more knowledge than the others. Maybe they want to prove themselves to be on the same level of intelligence. Perhaps they do know and want to keep going with the topic. Inherently, though, the phrase doesn’t engage the topic, no more than a “yes, and” (à la improv) might. The depth of conversation is devoid.

When looking at “Who? Why? Where? When? How?” Questions, the exformation is the why. I can talk to loads of people and hear about the “who” in their lives. I know “where” we are discussing, “when” we are discussing, and they tell me “how” they navigate their worlds and their time with others, but the “why” is the one thing that is never fully explained.

"That's just what I do," "Well, I was walking and ran into this old woman," "We live in the same building," these are each an explanation of "why" people have the interactions they do, sure, but they lack motivation. They lack emotional impact; they lack the continuation of the subject. Maybe this is a result of me being in the position of "I know, I know." I have looked to transform the exformation of others into information about them.

Them, not necessarily myself. Does that equate to new exformation about me?

Maybe I am inhibiting the development of my exformation into information, which in turn is inhibiting my understanding of myself and my position.

I don't know what I don't know. But I want to know. Why? Why look to understand strangers? Why not loved ones? Myself?

Alternatively, maybe understanding exformation is simply not the right approach.

Maybe my exformation can just stay exformation.

# Blue Skies

*"Blue sky thinking is the part of the creative process where you give your imagination free rein to consider possibilities. Rather than restricting your concepts to an 'if/then' understanding, you are free to ask, 'what if' and imagine an answer. You begin with what you want. [...] You still have all the allotted time available to you, for example, leaving many possibilities."*

The Blue Sky phase is endlessly exciting and daunting at the same time. I enjoy cycling through every possible idea, whether they seem initially good or bad, and getting everything out onto a page. Writing, sketching, and researching, this phase is an opportunity to dump out all thoughts and interest on the topic of the work. The scary part enters when you're done brain-dumping, and have to begin whittling down. The whittling is a concern. Often you can't whittle down until you put in a bit of work towards an outcome, and here enters the need to decide if the idea needs to be trashed

or shelved for later, or if you've encountered a block, or a hurdle to work around in order to develop an outcome for your very good idea.

I've only begun indulging in my art in the past few years. Before centring my education around art and design, it was just a general interest that I happened to be somewhat skilled in. After spending years dedicating myself to research, writing, and making, the questions guiding my work have grown in number and complexity. Which again, is one of the most treasured parts of my practice, and also the most challenging (the greatest ideas usually are).





Allowing yourself as an artist to be the guide, is what I think to be the greatest skill one could possess. Even in a working environment where you might answer to someone else, your own guiding light is how you will make the best work of your life. Despite being painfully aware of this, I am still working on this skill.

Part of that work, for me, definitely comes from the fact that years' worth of questions, and attraction to design and design theory, seem to have been held behind a gate for much of the time that I have been working. And recently has bubbled over so much that I can no longer set it aside for a later date. The time is now!

I feel as though, in an arts

education, particularly a design education, wires get crossed by accident when discussing a capstone project. The emphasis on the importance of the project in the course is evident, but the role of it post-graduation is not so much. The seriousness of the approach and the process is necessary regardless, but the idea of the work being used as a key part of a portfolio, or as a literal representation of your practice, presents itself whether you like it or not.

Partway through the reading this week in class, written by my professor, Robin Mitchell-Cranfield, she addresses the potential weight and place of a grad project in an artist's career:

*"A grad project might be the first step in twenty years of a particular exploration, or it might be something you finally get out of your system before you turn your attention elsewhere, or it might end up being a much less important part of your portfolio than something you made in third year."*

The part about getting something out of your system, silly as it sounds, made me start to tear up a bit. Hearing it (Robin had given students an audio recording of the reading, very helpful for staying on track, and also clearly drove home the content very well,) felt like being confronted outright with something in my head for the entirety of my final year of my undergrad thus far, and this week in particular had been gnawing. I have something that I need to get out of my system.

I came into this year exclusively because I was registered, and ready to finish. I was ready to be done before some life-altering events at the tail end of my summer. This event was followed by a month-long trip that began with some time with family and continued with moving non-stop, it took everything out of me.

I had barely made it through that month and got home just days before the fall semester began. The process of this final year focuses on the capstone project, for which, I could barely even think of. But, I was here. I had to bring something to class. Taking time off only crossed my mind when it was too late to withdraw without losses.

I spent half a semester not knowing what I was doing. The other half was spent playing catch-up with my colleagues. I ended my Fall term just having figured out a topic. An acceptable place to be, since everyone's work follows a different rhythm, but after a well-needed break, I don't really have much else to say on the topic. I've done my inquiries, and I don't know how to wrap them up with a nice bow because my heart isn't particularly in them.

*"If you are interested in something, you will figure it out. If you are interested, you will also need much less willpower to do so. Related to this, I tend to think that force is required where design fails. If you don't design a process that functions well for you, you will make up the difference by treating yourself roughly. If you don't design a brief that interests you, more force will be required to get it done. Better design requires less applied force."*



I can't figure out the work, so it requires more force, and I am taking it out on myself due to the frustration it's causing me. Reflecting right now, I can also say that continuing this way will bring nothing but bad design.

And I can say that outside of having read that excerpt.

The direction I am working in right now hurts. But at one point it didn't. There is something here in the work I've done so far, so I don't think that this is a matter of leaping to abandon what I did with my first semester, but rather an act of reframing it to find what about it drove me, and see if it connects to what I need to get off my chest.

Like a still life piece, I've been painting from one angle for so long. I've realized this week that I need to move my easel to the opposite side of the fruit bowl to keep going. The same content and, a different outlook. And that's where I am directing myself here.



# Slowing Down

I need to admit to a bad habit. I am a smoker. Not a cigarette smoker (not regularly at least), but a weed smoker. I must accompany this confession with the explanation that the effects of marijuana aren't the aspect I enjoy as much, although enjoyable when I do, but in the past year, I was introduced to smoking hemp flower. No effects of THC, just the habit, and the ritual of preparing.

Because I prefer little to no psychoactive aspects, I have to roll up myself. The act of rolling myself a little something to smoke has become a bit of a meditation. It's always something small, and always takes a bit of time and focus (no amount of experience has made me any more skilled in the task, unfortunately).

In the summer, I get to step out on my balcony, take a seat, and enjoy the warm summer evenings. But thanks to the cold and wet nature of Vancouver in the winter and spring, I get my ashtray, bring over a chair from my kitchen,

and open my living room window (another unfortunate confession to make).

I only do this in the evenings, usually before or after dinner, which gives it a very ritualistic nature. It is a component of my evening, not the end of my evening. Often I watch a movie or read a book while doing this, but on one of my days off from class last week, I was distracted from my movie by the sounds of the alleyway my window faces. I turned off my movie and removed my earbud to try to locate the sound. At this moment, I was completely taken by the sound, and sight past the alleyway, to the houses across the way.

I live on a floor of my apartment that sits just a bit higher than the rooftops of the houses. A bit like a Birds Eye view but more involved. Like an intimate look observing the things that surround my home.

I have been journaling lately, thoughts, doodles, items, and ideas whenever they cross my mind. So I took a moment to grab my little notebook and decided that this would be my activity this week (potentially my weekly activity for the whole semester). I will sit with my notebook, and my surroundings, for a devoted 20 minutes minimum, more if I am pulled further.

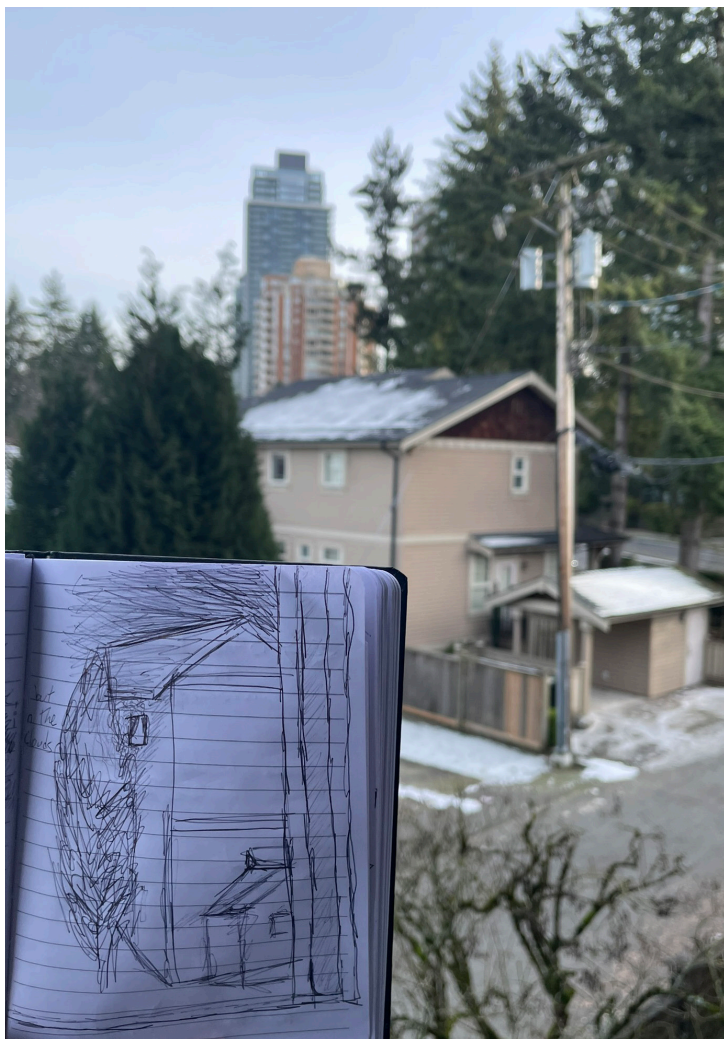
I wrote and drew things that I dwelled on. Not looking for things, but things that I noticed and had conscious thoughts about or that kept drawing me back. In the short time allotted, this wasn't too much, but each thing stood out clearly to me. The setup of my windowsill, the pattern of my ashtray, the tree across the alley (the same tree I took a photo and clipping of last week), and my neighbour's house.

There is always one small window of this townhouse with the light on. Others are often lit in the evenings, but past a certain point of the night, they turn off. Except one. I imagine it acts as a bit of a "porch light" for the tenants there. Keeping a light on for safety (somehow) is an age-old tradition, after all.

I rarely see anything through this window, it just glows. It was glowing tonight. Once I saw the outline of a person, and once a laundry rack, but each of those was only once. The glow is constant though. This glow reflects onto the big bushy tree of the home behind that building, too, so I suppose it makes sense that These two are constantly on my mind.

I took note of the clouds, as well. The gaps within them, how thin and sparse certain areas were. Though I didn't doodle all of them in the time that I had allotted myself, I got a few down.

And finally, I wrote. Just my small observations regarding sound. My only takeaway from this was finally realizing how writing poetry works. So maybe my writing can extend past convoluted thoughts and research and into vague statements that amount to semi-thoughtful observations.



Three  
Wind

# ee dows

*"Think about your childhood window, where was it? What did you see? Think about the window you were looking out this week. What surrounds you? Think about the window you'll be looking out next year. Where will this window be? What do you want to see?"*





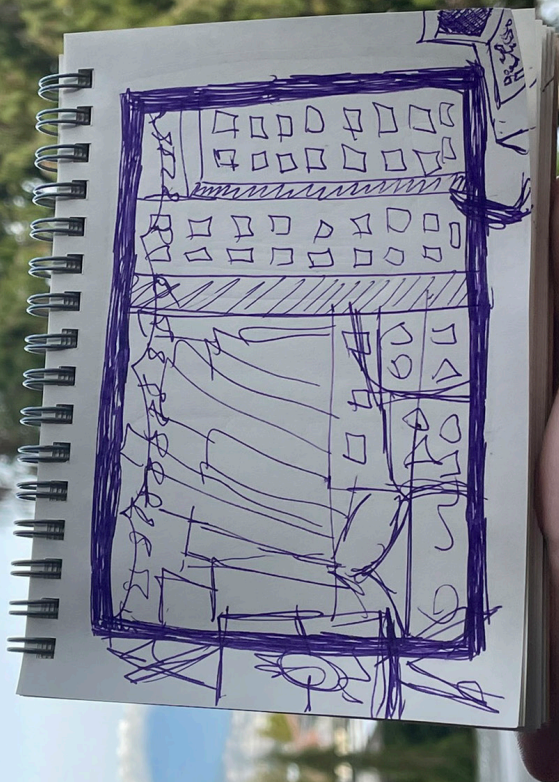
I lived on Vancouver Island as a kid, this is where my earliest memories are. My bedroom window went from a tiny thing, too high up on the wall for me to comfortably look out of, to a tall thing with a windowsill I could sit in. I can't remember why this change was made to my bedroom as a kid, but I was always thankful for it. My bedroom was on the side of the house that faced the ocean, so, over the rooftops of the houses further and further down the incline, towards the water, I could see the water myself from that window. And the land across it (to this day I have no idea what exactly land this was) with a large lighthouse. The most notable part, though, was the cruise ships late at night passing through that water. Being able to see the lights pass on the darkest nights was always something that stuck out to me as I grew older.



Funnily enough, during my activity this week, I stared out my window without distractions and kept my notebook and a pen in front of me to write or draw anything that particularly stood out to me in that time. My notes included a sketch of my windowsill and the house and tree outside the window that I stare constantly at (the tree is the same one that I took a clipping from, and brought to class in my first week back of the Spring semester.)

This house has one little window that always has a light on inside. Rarely do I see any people, just the glow of the light, and its reflection on the tree outside. An excerpt from my reflection on the aforementioned activity:

*"There is always one small window of this townhouse with the light on. Others are often lit in the evenings, but past a certain point of the night, they turn off. Except one. I imagine it acts as a bit of a "porch light" for the tenants there. Keeping a light on for safety (somehow) is an age-old tradition, after all. "*



A year from now, where would my window be? What would I like to see? Where I will be in one year is a question I have not thought about recently. Too many other points have occupied my mind. When I think now, I would like to still live in Vancouver, or maybe a city like Montreal. If I was still in Vancouver I would love to be looking out the same window as I do today, provided there is a new caretaker of the building (to explain without going into depth about the hordes of situations I have been put in living here, the current caretaker is simply a massive

source of anxiety and stress.) That, or maybe a new building, whichever is most realistic to live a peaceful life. I found myself thinking more about what was inside my window in the future. I want a studio space or a workspace at a job. Somewhere dedicated to design, and separate from the rest of my life. I think a focused place to create is one of the things I have been longing for the most lately, so my hopes for one in the future have grown as a result.



# To Peel a Pomegranate

Pomegranates are very important to me, culturally, and personally. Not only are they my favourite fruit, but they are significant in all of my religious and cultural holidays as something that brings newness, passion, and fertility. I have always looked at these things as elements of daily life. To take note of and interest in my work and daily actions, to have a fruitful life. Lately, these things have been more and more present in my mind as I've struggled with the completion of my degree, and the development of my art practice.

This week I sat at my bedroom window, rather than my usual place at my studio window, and was able to examine a new perspective of my view. Looking past the houses that neighbour my apartment, past the fluffy tree in the alley, and out to the mountains northeast of me. This has conveniently coincided with all of the visualizing of life that I have been doing. Towards what kind of work I will be doing in the near future, towards the development of my grad project (which has taken yet another hard turn, surprise surprise,) and towards the moves I need to make to get past my current surroundings, to those mountains.

Back to my pomegranate.

I sat myself down, and while watching the smoke from my ashtray float out through the window screen, I peeled my pomegranate.

Many old tales say that the way someone peels a pomegranate is how they treat a lover, but in general, I think it reflects how we treat our loved ones. And more so, how we treat ourselves (or should be treating ourselves.)

Some people might be aggressive and tough on

themselves, slicing a knife right down the middle, destroying the precious jewels inside, and the wasted juice dripping across their hands. Some might pull it apart quickly, smacking the seeds into a bowl, and maybe those people need a swift kick in the right direction to complete things. And others, like myself, score the sections gently and pull apart the seeds and skin so as not to lose a single seed, or spill a single drop.

Calmly, and carefully. Taking the time necessary to complete the job, being gentle with every step. I don't typically treat myself in the same way, but I think I should.

Taking apart a pomegranate is a laborious task in general, but when you take on my method, it multiplies tenfold. It is something that has become meditative for me. And the night that I spent sitting in front of my window this week, peeling and looking out at the mountains in the very moment the fog cleared, the sound of the seeds snapping off their tiny stems grew louder and louder with each section I completed.

The tiny crunch, the sound of each one falling into my little bowl. So much happening as a result



of such a small task. The simple goal of opening this fruit involved so many careful steps. It speaks to how much work goes into every little part of our lives. From maintaining things day-to-day to achieving larger goals. To be rough with yourself, smacking the seeds out or cutting through as fast as possible with a blade, is only going to cause a mess to be cleaned up afterwards. If some juice is spilled while pulling carefully, at least an attempt was made to avoid the mishap. The actions were deliberate and careful, and shit just happened.

Looking out at my potential future, at the mountains visible between rooftops, and focusing on the movements of my fingers working meticulously, became an opportunity to reframe my approach to the future, and the pressure maintained on myself throughout each of the steps that I've made, and how to adjust with each step to come.

## Bad Days and Self-Direction

“Do you feel  
bossed  
or pressured?  
Do you fear  
committing to one  
path because you’ll  
lose the possibility  
of another?”

*“Goals” by Robin Mitchell Cranfield*

## **Another excerpt that hits me right where it hurts!**

In completing projects, the fear of committing to one direction, or even committing to changing directions when something isn't working, is quite possibly my biggest issue. What if it is a waste of time? What if I miss an opportunity because of it? What if I am taking an easy route out instead of taking the jump to do something better? Or taking on something challenging that will ultimately be better in the end? It leaves me in a state of decision, with no decision being made.

Self-directing my work and exploring surrounding lines of thought as I stumble upon them. But the pressure and the bossing are the elements that come in to ruin things for me. Conforming my thoughts and explorations to fit an outline asked of me. Of course, this is not something I am entirely against, that is the name of the game in design, after all. But in the realm of my capstone work, it is something that has tangibly stunted me. Although I can definitely push back against anything I don't agree with, deviating from the advice of people I respect and value is gnawing and arduous.

Again, what if it's the wrong decision? What is the right one? How much time am I wasting trying to decide?

To be passionate (\*and steadfast when necessary) is a skill I've worked on and seek to develop further. To have an openness with myself and with my colleagues and advisors that allows for the progression I need. To be able to say that something doesn't help me, and to refuse to take advice that I don't find fitting.

I am passionate, undoubtedly. I have questions and I need answers, whether anyone else wants them or not.

Exploring these questions is one of the most fulfilling things I've been able to do. But passion can only fill your cup so much.

This inability is a limitation that works deviously well in conjunction with my current inability to control my mind at many times. Compartmentalizing, for it all to come out at once, allows some good days work-wise in between, but isn't as sustainable as embracing the ebbs and flows of difficulty within my world of design.

Cheers to embracing bad days and self-direction!



# What do we Owe Each Other?

I think I've officially moved from my studio space window to my bedroom window, bad in some ways (ventilation is definitely not as good for my unfortunate habit,) and good in others (mostly that it is very cozy, but it also allows me to reflect more, and get rid of some of the sounds coming from my ancient refrigerator that are ever so distracting when I'm trying to do my focused little tasks.)

This change has made me notice that my view has changed. Where I used to only be able to see the houses across the alley, where everyone seems to go to bed quite early in the evening, from my bedroom, I can see the apartments a block away.



I've always taken note of the lights in the windows of apartment buildings, when I'm walking home from work at night I pass a little cluster whose residents seem to be night owls. The majority of the units have lights shining through their windows at all hours of the day (and night.)

Something in particular about observing the windows of apartment buildings is the types of lights themselves, each unit has a different tone or colour of light, and I enjoy imagining what the inside looks like. A bright blueish-white light at two in the morning, how clinical? Or the warm oranges that I'm a fan of, making the glowing

curtains seem so inviting. Or even the colourful pulsing lights like someone is raving in their little Vancouver shoebox. What are all of these people doing in there?

In the same way that I can imagine what people are doing in their apartments based on the colour of their lights, in general, knowing that each person I see walking down on the sidewalk when I look out from the train is living their own life, with a huge possibility of wildly fantastic or heartbreaking things happening to them is something that has always itched in my mind. Who are each of them and what happened to them this morning? Or last night?

A curiosity into their lives as individuals, who I'll never see again (or in the case of the glowing apartment windows, will never see, period.) Is unavoidable for me, and makes me wonder if they're looking out at me, walking down the sidewalk or sitting at the edge of my bed looking out at them, and wondering what kind of person I am to be up at that hour. Where I'm coming from and what happened to me this morning.

I've always thought that we all owe each other something as people. Some kind of general respect or courteousness, understanding, even without exchanging words. And maybe that's why I wonder about the lives of others so often, humanizing total strangers as they pass me by.

More often lately, I've wondered how I'm able to humanize other people more than those close to me. Sometimes you have people who are so close in your lives that you actually leave out details while catching up. I find family often falls into this category.

Because they're so close, it's almost expected that they'll just know. Or know to ask. Or know to tell. A real double-edged sword

because I'm realizing in the same way that I might not divulge too freely or I expect to be asked, I'm not always playing that role for them either.

And so I've begun wondering about the colour of light in their windows, as I look out of mine.





# The Plight of Presenting

Reflecting on presenting is not something I typically enjoy doing, and especially not lately.

I had a pretty rough one last semester. Thanks to work and other coursework (creating and installing a massive exhibit piece) I didn't have much time to gather things and had no clue how to talk about the process of the work thus far (self-directed grad work that didn't have much direction, and my process at that point was short and sweet, to say the least.) To make matters worse, I couldn't get my presentation down to the allotted time while rehearsing the night before, my fridge broke, which caused a massive argument with my landlord (that lasted the full day I was presenting, phone calls

abound, and continued into the weekend where it became worse because I wasn't able to take calls (My living situation is evidently, not ideal.)

The day of my presentation, two people were sick, which made our schedule change and rather than being the last presenter of the room that half our class was working in for the day, everyone was moved to one room, and I was the last presenter out of everyone, and presented to around eighty people rather than 30-40. A crowd which included my entire undergrad major, our advisors, some people's friends and family, masters students, and invited faculty. The stress was unbelievable, to say the least.

The cherries on top of this were my squeaky boots as I walked from the back of the room all the way to the podium, a fact which I completely blocked out of my mind until doing my class reading this week, and despite sanitizing and censoring how I explained that I experienced a hard loss this summer (necessary context to the piece of work I was about to talk about) I burst into tears for a moment.

Where usually my issues are speaking positively (or neutrally) about myself and my work, my issues this most recent time were everything but that. So there is one improvement at least! I usually have quite an easy time with presenting outside of this though. I don't find the strategies of my peers helpful in improving myself, although seeing the people described in the reading as strong talkers who leave their work to the last minute speak so confidently about things that were more obviously last minute, is a skill I admire despite being frustrated by it at times.

These sorts of research presentations, though, tend to be what I enjoy more. If the final work isn't there yet (or if it is) being able to give context and highlight the depth of work done in the process of coming to the final product is something that feels good. Give yourself some props for having done that.

I always look forward to critique and input. I try to surround myself with artists that I think are talented and whom I admire deeply. in my mind, being with people who I look up to can do nothing but make me improve in my art. I firmly believe

that you get what you put into the classes (or the work, outside of an academic setting.) And so I try hard to give thoughtful critique, and understand the work being done shown to me, and I find that the critique I get back from peers (with some exceptions) tends to fall flat and not do much for me. Which is something that has caused intense frustration this year in particular. I do look forward to a day where I can present to a group and get back the type of care that I try my hardest to give to others.

My presentation sandwich is usually in the more literal realm. After a big presentation or event, or even just a bad day, my go-to way to recharge is to pick up food from somewhere that I love, to satisfy the craving I've had all week. This works fantastically, especially if you are someone who strays away from ordering in without a "reason".

Letting go has also been a good practice. If there's something I can improve for next time then surely I'll note it down, but at a certain point, you do need to just realize that what's done is done and you can't go back to change it. Live [on] and let [it] live [in that moment].



# City Candles

The past month has been very reflective in terms of what I want to get out of my capstone work, and where I want to go from here. A month of just thinking and writing and reflecting. Only in the past week have I begun to make anything, after a week of planning and brainstorming things I was potentially capable of starting/ completing (I am not interested in wasting any more time here.)

The conclusion that I came to, was starting to lean into my interest in publication, and working by hand. Coptic stitching my books, exploring various types of physical manipulation of the visuals going

into the books, and bringing my reflections thus far (and future ones) into the work as well.

While my activities each week have been an act of slowing down and removing distractions, the work I am putting into these publications also involves slowing down. Doing major components by hand, and incorporating printmaking, these methods involve tedious, focused, time-consuming, repetitive actions. They quickly become careful and meditative, and similarly to how my weekly activity makes me slow down and remove outside distractions, becoming more connected to my

actions and reflections like these, the repetitive work I do connects me more to the storytelling involved in the publication overall.

My window changed this week. Just a few minutes from my house, at the home of a loved one, the view is quite similar. Mountains in the distance, houses all around, cars passing on a busy street right outside the front door.

The only difference here is that here, there's space to sit outside on the patio and pace around (I don't currently have any patio furniture, so I am usually limited to sitting in the windowsill.) The view here is like a panoramic photo on your phone. Your entire peripheral view is filled with surroundings as far out as the fog will show on any given night. Most of the view is small rooftops and mountains, with some cranes and a bridge with red lights at their highest points flashing steadily through the night. Then far off to one side, past the busy street with cars at all hours of the evening, skyscrapers come back into play. I am certain they're from the same neighbourhood as my usual window, but from here, the different lights that I admire carefully on the average night, are

now so much more ambiguous. Covered a little bit by the regular houses immediately surrounding my new perch for the week, the lights of each floor of the buildings flickering slightly behind the silhouette of the houses.

The contrast of these silhouettes and candle-like little flickers is yet again (to me) a reflection of slowing down. A quieter area that still moves steadily, compared to the buildings of people up at all hours with a steady buzz all night long. While they both serve the work and my practice well in different ways, slowing down and keeping steady like my window this week is the current key to refining my undergraduate capstone work.

Bringing in the focuses of my weekly activity to my research allowed me to sit in discomfort with a lot of thoughts about loss, and open up candidly about the experience of grieving, combining what is considered more "fine arts" making with design making. A perfect crossover for me personally.







# An Afterword

Now, having completed my capstone work, I can say that I have had a lot of things about my design practice made clearer than ever. Where I once really tried to tailor things to what is more palatable on the surface, I now really indulge myself in my commitment to thoughtful work that is relevant, meaningful, and truly reflective of the content I am trying to represent. Blurring the lines of what is widely categorized as design versus art, and intentionally breaking design conventions in the name of what feels right for any given project.

Being able to take mentorship this year in its truest form has also contributed heavily to the confidence behind my design work. Bringing my ideas and concerns forward openly and with confidence that I can not only learn from those I look up to as colleagues, but also collaborate with them in a way I haven't thought of myself able to in my previous years at Emily Carr.

This capstone work is all mine, and the design choices are directly representative of the intimate content. The process and research behind it have allowed me to confront this loss in my life in a way that has drastically changed my ability to talk about it. Where once I was crying at a podium in front of a hundred people, now I can sit and talk about the intricacies of my choices and their connections to my research without my voice faltering. I have always valued authenticity in this field, and I try to represent myself most genuinely and be the type of designer that I would want to work with. This project has allowed me to talk authentically about my work, desires, and skills more than ever before.

I am confident in my choices as a designer, I am endlessly excited to collaborate and to be mentored, and I am overflowing with ideas.

All of the murmurings documented in this book helped me decide to scrap a semester's worth of work and allow myself to confront the recent loss of a loved one that had occupied my mind for the entirety of the year. Culminating in a body of work using age-old printing processes, publication design, and alternative visual storytelling as methods of meditation, exploration of memory through loss, and confrontation of a world-shattering experience despite fear surrounding it.





GRIEF IS THE PRICE OF LOVE is a tribute to the deep pain of losing a loved one. It captures the reflective moments that arise in the aftermath of loss and the difficulty of grappling with it while the world around us continues to turn.

Through a combination of traditional art and design practices and alternative visual storytelling, this book covers the journey of reconciling with death and confronting the loss of a loved one head-on. With a stripped-back, intentional, making-based approach, every step of the journey towards acceptance is documented, as well as the equal parts sorrow and calmness that come with it.



GRIEF IS THE  
PRICE OF LOVE

NATALIE



JANINE





*Natalie Janine* is a designer who lives and works on the unceded traditional territories of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Nations.

With a focus on publication design and art direction, Natalie creates thoughtful and experimental work with a solid conceptual drive. Often tackling subjects surrounding greater social and cultural influences, they also explore the good, the bad, and the ugly parts of day-to-day life in all their glory.

With an equally rich and beloved printmaking practice, analogue mediums regularly inch their way into Natalie's digital toolbox, setting the scene for iterative work that helps achieve unique visual storytelling backed by genuine care and interest.

Instagram: @lovenatreally  
natalie.janine@hotmail.com

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the 1990s, the number of people with a mental health problem has increased by 50% (Mental Health Foundation, 2000). The prevalence of mental health problems has increased in the general population, and the incidence of mental health problems has increased in the prison population.

There is a growing awareness of the need to address the mental health needs of prisoners. The Department of Health (2000) has published a strategy for mental health services, which includes a commitment to improve the mental health of prisoners. The Department of Health (2000) has also published a strategy for mental health services, which includes a commitment to improve the mental health of prisoners.

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